

YOGA INSTRUCTION THROUGH AUSLAN: SHOWING AND TELLING



Research undertaken by Melissa Thompson

Yoga instruction by Deaf Yoga Teachers Karli Dettman and Natalie
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Context – Why do this research?

- Partnership between Karli Health Centre and Yoga Foundation Australia - focus on evidence base for yoga.
- Lack of research – contrast with US – professional development for interpreters, published research on use of ASL for describing anatomy.
- Highlight the difference between hearing and Deaf yoga classes.
- Why me – yoga background (participant in both Auslan and spoken English classes), volunteer with Karli Health Centre.

Research into what?

- Class and room set up.
- linguistic features of Auslan used in teaching.
- Which linguistic 'rules' are altered in the yoga class,
 - when the teacher is themselves in a yoga pose – alterations to signing and the accessible signing space.
- How the teacher is able to both 'tell' through Auslan and 'show' through demonstration with their bodies.

Findings:

Auslan is a visual-manual language, wonderful at describing visual and spatial features. Students in a Deaf yoga class are shown the information in a number of different ways.

- Shown through visual explanation in Auslan, often with simultaneous re-enforcement of movements by the teacher's body.
- See the pose demonstrated in real-life by the teacher.



A visual language

- Lighting
- Room set up – mat placement, visual distractions.



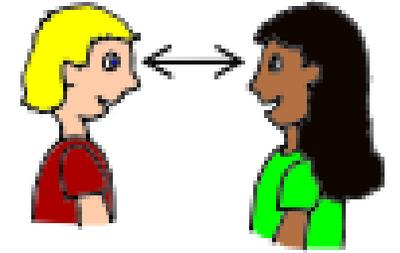
Major information conveyed in a yoga class:

Yoga instruction can be broken into content or description of three basic types:

- 1) *Yoga philosophy, history, theoretical basis.*
- 2) *Description of a pose – the ‘what’ and ‘why’ - body structures involved, purpose; form and function.*
- 3) *Description of a pose – the ‘how’ - type of movement, length pose is held, number of repetitions, breathing within the pose.*
 - 3a) *How in a general/textbook form.*
 - 3b) *How – for each individual.*



Eye contact and gaze



- Formal register – Content Type 1 and 2 -
 - central point or moving between the students,
 - watching for backchannelling.
 - Not directed toward any one individual.
- Consultative register – Content Type 3 (especially Type 3b) –
 - Communication more two-way between teacher and student (one at a time).
 - The teacher's eye gaze locks with the student affected.
- Drops or disengages when the teacher is demonstrating a pose, or when the students are practicing poses themselves.



Releasing and regaining attention

- Explicitly tell students when they need to watch, how their attention will be brought back, and when they can let their attention drop to within themselves.



Pose names, Sanskrit terms, yoga philosophy

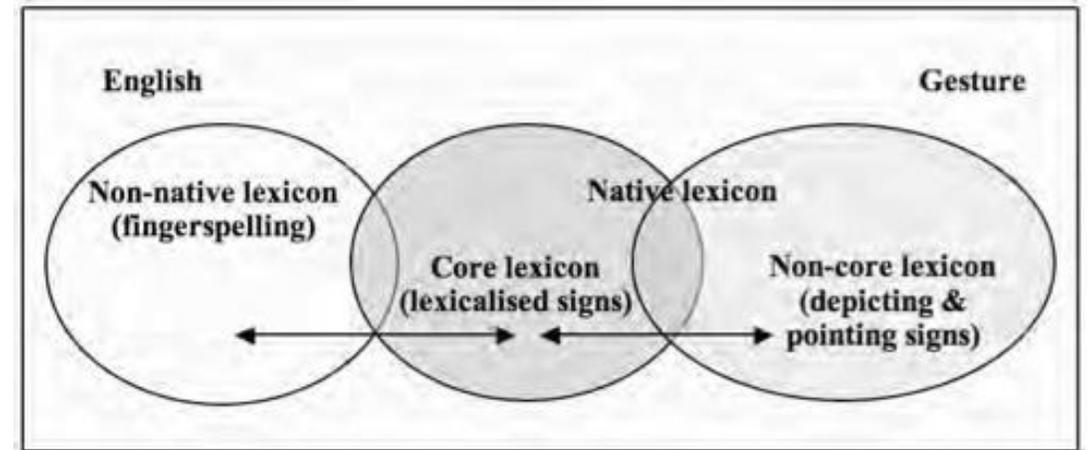
Finger-spelling in Sanskrit (sometimes), fingerspelling in English, allocation of a lexical or depicting sign.

Sanskrit	English	Auslan
Adho Mukha Śvānāsana	Down-face dog pose	DOG (lexical sign)
urdhva mukha	Upward-facing dog pose	FACE (lexical) gaze-lifts-upward (depicting sign, 2 hand as classifier for eyes) DOG (lexical)
Bhujāṅgāsana	Cobra	SNAKE (lexical)



The Auslan lexicon

- Linguistic terms.
- Lexicon – the signs used in Auslan



- **Lexical signs** – frozen or established, completely specified, standardised – can find in a dictionary.
- **Non-lexical** (productive signs) – eg: **depicting signs** – created by signers from combinations of meaningful units. Match the situation being discussed. Handshape, orientation, location and movement chosen to give meaning.
- One important type of depicting sign – **entity/classifier** signs. Set up space as if it was a scaled-down model or map (diagrammatic or depicting space). Move or place entities in this space like a stage or a map.
 - Examples: 1 handshape - person, B handshape - vehicle, upturned 2-handshape – legs.
 - Entity signs to describe spatial relationships. In English need prepositions like 'on', 'beside', 'under'.

Linguistic features used to describe yoga poses

- Depicting signs (for anatomy and movement)
- Entity signs (classifiers)
- Re-enforcing/mirroring of hand movement with body movement
- Negation to contrast what is and is not wanted.



A 17th-century birch bark manuscript of Pāṇini's grammar treatise from Kashmir. Panini is considered the father of Indian linguistics, the first person to describe the linguistics of a language. He wrote a formal description of the Sanskrit language in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. The original language of yoga was also Sanskrit.

Depicting signs: anatomic structures, movements



Spine – structure of vertebral column, movements of spine in sequence.

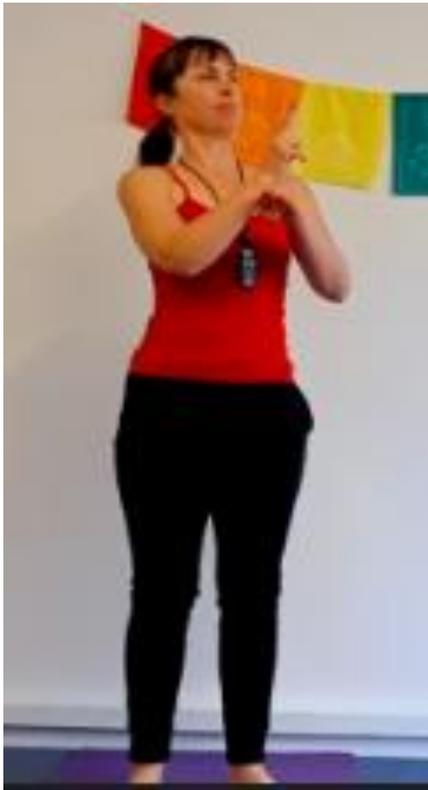


Torso and head represented by forearm and fist. Showing lateral movement that is not wanted in the pose: “negation”. Note mirroring/re-enforcement with signer’s body.



Ball and socket joint: structure and movement of shoulder.

Entity (classifiers): Legs



Legs up the wall

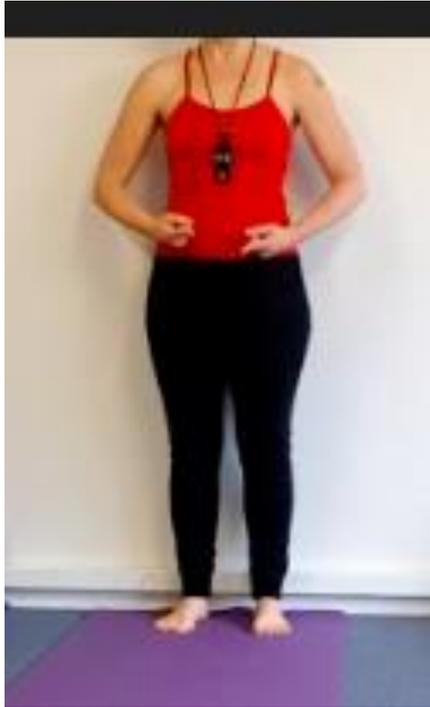


Standing

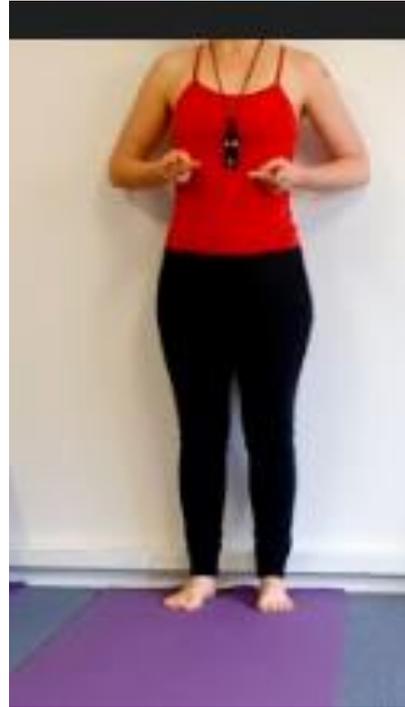


Kneeling

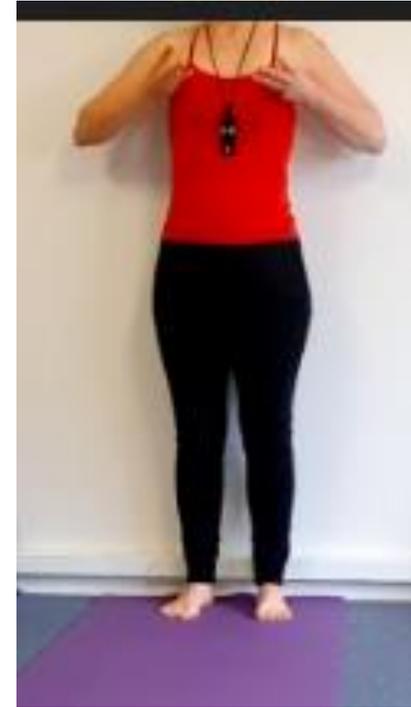
Sign modification for location and number



Inhale, 1st filling the abdomen.



2nd fill the lower chest.



3rd fill the upper chest.

Referring to body parts (anatomical structures)



Mapping feet onto hands because feet are outside signing space. Feet must first be indexed. Show orientation and movement with hands.



Indicating distance of body part from the centre/core of the body. 1-Handshape for distal; B-Handshape for proximal.



Size of body part surface area: 1-Handshape (small) or others if larger (5- or B-).



Internal vs external body parts: Bent-B for internal.

Adjustment to signing space while in a yoga pose



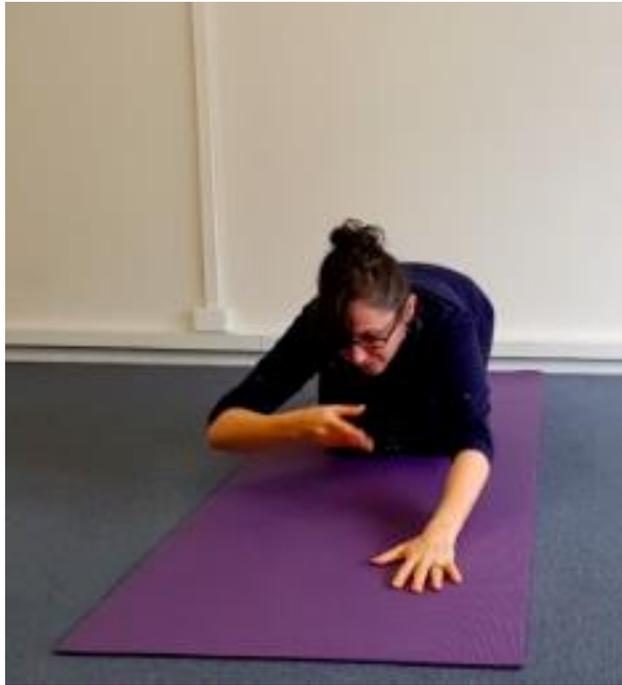
Legs



Feet

Show and tell

Signing ('telling') while in a yoga pose ('showing')



Inhale



Cat



Dog

The beauty of Auslan for yoga instruction



- Hands demonstrating the structure, movement and orientation of a body part in a yoga pose.
- Visual language able to efficiently convey spatial information.
- Showing through both Auslan and demonstration – the two occur and work together.



Yoga: Connection of body, mind and spirit.

Yoga through Auslan: connection of 'show' and 'tell' through a visual-spatial language.